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United Nations Disarmament Information Programme

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 51/46 A of 10 December 1996, in which the Assembly called upon the Secretary-General to report on the performance of the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme since the last report and on plans for future work.

During the period under review (1 July 1996 to 30 June 1998), the traditional information activities were carried out, although owing to persistent staffing constraints, the publications programme was reduced and the development of the electronic medium proceeded more slowly than had been hoped.

It is expected that the re-establishment of the Department for Disarmament Affairs will lead to a reinvigoration of information and outreach activities.

Priority areas are:

(a) Weapons of mass destruction;

(b) Conventional weapons;

(c) Regional approaches.

Activities should be guided by the need for:

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(a) Greater exploitation of electronic means;

(b) Greater emphasis on products for the general public;

(c) Fuller cooperation with the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat, other departments and bodies outside the United Nations system.

A report on the financial status of the Trust Fund will be issued as an addendum to the present report.

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I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 51/46 A of 10 December 1996, entitled "United Nations Disarmament Information Programme", the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its fifty-third session a report covering both the implementation of the activities of the Programme by the United Nations system during the previous two years and the activities of the Programme contemplated by the system for the following two years. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request. At its fifty-second session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 52/39 D on the Programme, in which it expressed concern over decreasing contributions to the Programme and invited the Secretary-General to continue to support the timely publication and distribution of the *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook*.

2. On 12 November 1997, the General Assembly adopted resolution 52/12, entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform", by which, *inter alia*, the Department for Disarmament Affairs was re-established. This change, which reflected the Secretary-General's aim to give greater visibility to the United Nations mandate in the field of disarmament, went into effect on 1 January 1998. It is expected that the increase in resources that will flow from this shift in priorities will lead to a reinvigoration of information activities within the new Department.[1]

Priority concerns

3. Information activities will flow from the priority concerns of the Department: (a) weapons of mass destruction (notably nuclear weapons) and efforts towards their systematic and progressive reduction and ultimate elimination, and (b) the destabilizing effects and destructive power of conventional weapons, with a focus on efforts to curb the proliferation of small arms and promote confidence-building, openness and transparency at the global, regional and subregional levels. It should be noted that these broad subject areas, in conjunction with the promotion of regional approaches, are reflected in the structure of the new Department.

Changing technology

4. In addition, innovations in communications technology have had and will continue to have an enormous impact on the information programme, speeding up and making less expensive the transmission of information, data and documentation worldwide. In the latter half of 1996, the Department for Disarmament Affairs established its own home page under the area "peace and security" within the newly established United Nations Web site on the Internet.[2] Users include permanent missions, educational and research institutions and the general public.

II. Information and education activities

5. Because of staffing constraints that persisted throughout all the reporting period, the traditional publications programme was somewhat reduced in terms of type of publication and frequency of issuance, as indicated below. As part of the Organization's efforts to serve the international community by keeping in step with the latest communications trends and

technologies, the Department for Disarmament Affairs has expanded its use of electronic means to disseminate information to its major constituents. It began to design its own home page on the Internet as a component of the United Nations Web site, and made the composite table of the Register of Conventional Arms available electronically (see annex for the information page on the Web site).

Publications produced in the reporting period

6. The following publications were issued in the reporting period:

United Nations Disarmament Yearbook, vol. 21 (1996) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.IX.1) and vol. 22 (1997) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.IX.1); forthcoming in all languages

Status of Multilateral Arms Regulation and Disarmament Agreements, fifth edition (1996) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.IX.3); forthcoming in all languages

Disarmament: A Periodic Review by the United Nations, vol. XIX, Nos. 2 and 3 (1996), and vol. XX, Nos.1 and 2/3 (1997); forthcoming in French, Russian and Spanish

United Nations Concern for Peace and Security in Central Africa: Reference Document/Mobilisation des Nations Unies pour la paix et la sécurité en Afrique centrale (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.IX.2)

Register of Conventional Arms: Information Booklet (1998); forthcoming in French and Spanish

Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty brochure (1998); forthcoming in French, Russian and Spanish[3]

7. The following publications were also issued in the reporting period, in cooperation with the Non-Governmental Organizations Committee on Disarmament:

1996: Disarmament at a Critical Juncture: Panel Discussions Organized by the Non-Governmental Organizations Committee on Disarmament (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.IX.2); English only

William Epstein, *The United Nations and Nuclear Disarmament: Achievements On the Way to a Nuclear-free World* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.IX.4); English only

Education activities

8. The Department remained in active contact with the major constituents that its information activities serve. Staff participated in panels organized by the diplomatic and academic communities on illicit trade in small arms, light weapons and building societal resistance to violence. The Department participated in meetings of the International Association of University Presidents/Commission on Disarmament Education, Conflict Resolution and Peace, and at the annual international seminars on arms control and disarmament for scholars and educators held at Juniata College, Pennsylvania. In addition, at the request of the public inquiries unit of the Department of Public Information, staff undertook numerous briefing engagements, approximately 30 a year, for the benefit of student visitors in the framework of university programmes dealing with the United Nations, United Nations Association members from various countries and other groups.

Looking towards the future

9. The Department is currently reviewing its information and outreach activities to ascertain how best to contribute to the Secretary-General's stated objective of turning the United Nations into an effective modern communications-oriented organization (see A/AC.198/1998/2). Over the next two years, it is envisaged that these activities will be guided by the need for:

(a) Greater exploitation of electronic means;

(b) Greater emphasis on products for the general public;

(c) Fuller cooperation with the Department of Public Information, other departments and bodies outside the United Nations system.

Publications and outreach programme

10. Activities of the publications and outreach programme in the reporting period included:

(a) *Disarmament Yearbook*;

(b) Status of multilateral arms regulation and disarmament agreements: texts of new treaties, and new reservations and declarations;

(c) Home page: updates, such as statements of the Secretary-General, summaries of meetings, calendar of events and links to database;

(d) Disarmament updates/fact sheets: electronic format and small brochures on, for example, the Pelindaba Treaty, the Ottawa Convention, practical disarmament measures, compliance mechanisms, security assurances and the disarmament information system;

(e) Occasional papers: reproduction of one or two papers presented at a conference (replacing *Periodic Review* and *Topical Papers*);

(f) Resolutions and decisions of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly: produced within a few weeks of the completion of consideration of resolutions by the General Assembly.

Coordination between the Department for Disarmament Affairs and other bodies/offices

11. The Department produced a number of brochures and fliers in the reporting period, in consultation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organization. It also produced a documentary film on small arms, entitled "Messenger of Peace", with an emphasis on nuclear proliferation and disarmament and the issue of small arms.

III. Special events and collaboration with civil society

Non-governmental organizations panels

12. As an important part of its outreach programme, the Department for Disarmament Affairs maintained active liaison with the public and the non-governmental community. The latter group, in collaboration with the Department and the Department of Public Information, organized a number of events in the spring of 1997 during the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty; in 1998 during the session of the Disarmament Commission; and in the fall of 1997 and 1998 during Disarmament Week. On these occasions, panels of experts discussed the Non-Proliferation Treaty review process; nuclear disarmament; the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and the Canberra Commission report; prevention of the weaponization of outer space; conventional weapons; small arms proliferation; and a ban on anti-personnel mines. The Department cooperated with the Non-Governmental Organizations Committee on Disarmament in publishing material arising from their joint events.

Exhibits

13. In 1997, a photo exhibit entitled "The United Nations and nuclear disarmament" was mounted in the public lobby at Headquarters, and a brochure on the subject, which also served as a guide to the exhibit, was issued.

14. As part of the celebrations for the 1997 United Nations Day at the United Nations Office at Geneva, the Geneva Branch of the Department organized a stand presenting the history and achievements of the Conference on Disarmament and its predecessors.

Trends and future activity

Role of non-governmental organizations

15. In the first part of 1997, in the framework of a sub-working group on non-governmental organizations of the high-level working group of the General Assembly on the strengthening of the United Nations, the president of the Non-Governmental Organizations Committee on Disarmament informally presented ideas on increasing access to the Main Committees, including the First Committee, and increasing participation in the work of the Disarmament Commission and in the Conference on Disarmament. Subsequently, the General Assembly, by its decision 52/453, requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the role of civil society in the work of the United Nations at its fifty-third session.

16. In collaboration with States parties, the Department for Disarmament Affairs facilitated the participation of non-governmental organizations in the 1997 and 1998 sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, implementing a decision of the Committee to make time available at each session for representatives of non-governmental organizations to address delegations, by contrast with allowing them only to attend open meetings of the Committee, as had been the case during the preparatory process leading up to the 1995 Review Conference itself.

17. The Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters has had the practice of inviting members of the non-governmental organizations community to address its

meetings for purposes of consultation. It has recently been proposed that other categories of civil society, such as business, trade unions and the media, also be included. It can be expected that the trend towards closer and more active involvement by non-governmental organizations in disarmament questions will have implications for the development of United Nations disarmament information activities.

Exhibit

18. The exhibit on disarmament on the main floor of the Conference Building at Headquarters will be renovated in order to provide an up-to-date, broad and balanced view of the work of the international community in this field.

IV. Regional activities

19. In an effort to promote confidence-building and the exchange of information at the regional level, the Department for Disarmament Affairs has collaborated with individual Governments through its regional centres (see, for example, A/52/309) or in the framework of expert study groups appointed by the Secretary-General in the holding of regional conferences, meetings and seminars, either to examine issues of particular interest to a region or to examine how to tackle a global problem within a particular regional context. Such meetings may also have a strong training component (see sect. V below). During the period under review, workshops and meetings in the following subject areas were held:

(a) Small arms (Pretoria, 13–25 September 1996; San Salvador, 16 and 17 January 1997; and Kathmandu, 22 and 23 May 1997);

(b) Democratic institutions and peace in Central Africa (Bata, Equatorial Guinea: 11–15 May 1998);

(c) Disarmament and non-proliferation issues in the Asia and Pacific region (see report of the Secretary-General on the relevant United Nations regional centre).

20. In addition, the Department provided substantive servicing for meetings of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (see for example, A/52/283 and A/52/293) and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (see, for example, A/52/272).

21. The Department will continue its vigorous programmes of seminars and conferences in the Asia and Pacific region. It is expected that the strengthening of the regional centres at Lomé and Lima will lead to an increase in activities aimed at the promotion of dialogue and the establishment of confidence-building measures in Africa and Latin America.

V. Training activities

22. The Department for Disarmament Affairs continued to design and implement the United Nations disarmament fellowship, training and advisory services programme, which is designed for young diplomats, particularly from developing countries. During the period under review, a total of 43 fellows participated in the six-to-eight week annual programme.

23. The Department also provided training for graduate students serving as interns. Their assignments touched on various aspects of the Department's work, such as following the debate in the General Assembly and the First Committee and reporting thereon, assisting

in research tasks, drafting portions of publications, contributing to the database and servicing regional conferences.

24. In addition, staff provided training and materials for specialized areas in the field of disarmament. In order to assist officials in reporting to the Register of Conventional Arms and to answer technical questions, a workshop was held in Tokyo from 12 to 14 May 1997.

Looking towards the future

25. In the area of training, the Department will seek:

(a) To promote the participation of Member States in existing confidence-building mechanisms, such as the Arms Register (see A/52/871-S/1998/318, para. 27, in which the Secretary-General urged African States to participate in the Register and to establish supplementary subregional registers);

(b) To support Member States in peace-building. A subregional seminar on the training of trainers in practical disarmament measures in Africa is being planned for the latter half of 1998;

(c) To assist Member States in meeting their obligations to report information under the Ottawa Convention.

VI. Activities of the Department of Public Information

26. In accordance with its mandate and in cooperation with the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the Department of Public Information has continued to publicize United Nations activities in the field of arms limitation and disarmament.

Radio

27. During the period under review, the Department of Public Information provided extensive coverage on various aspects of disarmament and related issues in news bulletins and current affairs magazines, including the Conference on Disarmament at Geneva; the negotiation and signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty; Iraq and UNSCOM operations; the impact of landmines, the Oslo Conference and United Nations efforts for demining; the Chemical Weapons Convention; nuclear waste and contamination; and the proliferation of weapons in Africa. In addition, it produced 25 feature programmes devoted to questions of disarmament in the official and non-official languages for worldwide dissemination.

TV

28. Disarmament issues were featured on a range of Department of Public Information video products during the reporting period. *UN in Action*, the ongoing series of news magazine items distributed to more than 100 countries, included articles on biological weapons; bomblets in Laos; retraining soldiers in Guatemala; monitoring the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty; and several stories on landmines. These items were also broadcast on the "CNN World report" programme. "World chronicle", the United Nations television

discussion programme, included shows on chemical weapons and the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. A documentary on biological weapons, entitled "Secrets in the sand", was released in the reporting period, and to date has been broadcast in scores of countries.

Publications

29. Through its regular publications, *UN Chronicle*, *Yearbook of the United Nations* and *United Nations in Brief*, the Department of Public Information has routinely provided information on disarmament. During the reporting period, press releases disseminated information regarding the work of the First Committee, the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament. The new edition of the *Basic Facts About the United Nations* contains an extensive section covering the full range of disarmament issues and the role of the United Nations in this field.

30. In anticipation of the signing ceremony for the Ottawa Convention, the Department of Public Information published a three-element press kit on the landmine issue and the role of the United Nations. These publications were available at the conference site during the ceremony and were also posted to the United Nations home page.

31. During the reporting period, reports were issued in the Africa Recovery Series on Graca Machel's United Nations-sponsored study on measures to protect children from the impact of war, programmes of demining and assistance for survivors in Angola, and the massive number of small arms now circulating through the continent as a legacy of conflicts. The Department of Public Information is also planning to publish in September 1998 a briefing paper on the problem of small arms in Africa.

United Nations information centres

32. United Nations information centres actively publicized throughout the year issues related to the prevalence of landmines and other disarmament-related matters. United Nations information centres provided information support for the Secretary-General's mission to Iraq and for two regional meetings – the United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues at Sapporo, Japan, and a regional seminar on anti-personnel landmines at Sana'a, Yemen. For the observance of Disarmament Week, United Nations information centres engaged in outreach activities, cooperating with government representatives, educational institutions, the media and local non-governmental organizations to inform constituents about the role of the United Nations in disarmament.

33. A number of United Nations information centres arranged exhibits, lectures, round tables and symposia on such topics as landmines, nuclear non-proliferation, the Chemical Weapons Convention, UNSCOM and the Ottawa Convention, and publicized joint United Nations system landmine-clearing operations. In addition, United Nations information centres organized model United Nations, mounted educational exhibits and screened United Nations videos, such as "Secrets in the sand", "Boom" and "The menace of land mines", for students and other audiences. Several United Nations information centres translated and disseminated, in more than nine local languages, the message of the Secretary-General to the Oslo Conference, and issued newsletters and disseminated Department of Public Information press releases, publications and other materials devoted to disarmament.

Other activities

34. The activities of the Department of Public Information include distributing, lending and screening films and videos, and answering public inquiries. Disarmament-related issues were also highlighted at the weekly briefings for non-governmental organizations organized by the Department at Headquarters. The Department is also working with the Department for Disarmament Affairs on plans for the renovation and redesign of the disarmament exhibit that is part of the guided tour route at Headquarters.

Notes

[1] The organization of the Department for Disarmament Affairs is set out in the relevant Secretary-General's bulletin (ST/SGB/1998/10); the term "Department for Disarmament Affairs" is used throughout the present report to designate the Secretariat unit responsible for carrying out the disarmament information programme, although the Department was established towards the end of the period under review.

[2] The Internet address is:

http://www.un.org

and link to "Peace and security: Department for Disarmament Affairs".

[3] Produced by the Department for Disarmament Affairs and the Department of Public Information, in cooperation with the provisional technical secretariat of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and with the generous support of the Government of Finland.

[4] An updated version of the *Register of Conventional Arms: Information Booklet* was produced in April 1998; French and Spanish versions of the update are forthcoming.

Annex

Department for Disarmament Affairs Web site information page

Disarmament Information

- *Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters*
- *Arms Register*
- *Biological Weapons Convention*
- *Fellowship Programme*
- *Landmines*
- *Multilateral Agreements*
- *NPT Review Process*
- *Regional Centres*
- *Small arms*
- *UN Sales Publications*
- *UNIDIR*
- *Other Sources*

➤ Public Inquiries

Bibliography of DDA Publications

[To Order]

Year	Volume	No	Sales No
The United Nations Disarmament Yearbook			
1997	22		E.98.IX.1
1996	21		E.97.IX.1
1995	20		E.96.IX.1
1994	19		E.95.IX.1
Status of Multilateral Arms Regulation and Disarmament Agreements			
1996		5th ed.	E.97.IX.3
1992	1 & 2	4th ed.	E.93.IX.11
Disarmament: A periodic review by the United Nations			
1997	XX	2 and 3	Non-Sales
1997	XX	1	Non-Sales
1996	XIX	3	Non-Sales
1996	XIX	2	Non-Sales
1996	XIX	1	Non-Sales

Ad Hoc Publications

1998	Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty brochure	Non-Sales (*forthcoming*)
1998	United Nations Concern for Peace and Security in Central Africa	E.98.IX.3
1997	The United Nations and Nuclear Disarmament, by William Epstein, 43 pages	E.97.IX.4